TOWN & COUNTRY CHURCH

In This Issue

This is the annual issue of TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH devoted to a report of many contributions to the National Convocation on the Church in Town and Country.

Because of limitations imposed by the exchequer, only digests of important papers, addresses and reports can be given here.

On Page 1 we introduce to you Dr. I. George Nace who has become one of the executive secretaries of the Home Missions Council of North America, which administers the Committee on Town and Country for itself and for the Federal Council of Churches and the International Council of Religious Education.

Dr. Nace's address was the closing message at the Lincoln Convocation, held November 8-10, 1949. In his address he lifted up in an interesting way many things dealt with in the sessions.

The other contributions published on the various pages are indicative of the purpose and content of the annual rally by "the friends of the town and country church."

No. 59
February, 1950

Rechurching Rural America

I. GEORGE NACE

• The rechurching of rural America is long overdue. In earlier years when the changes occurring in rural life were slow, there was little or no pressure upon the church to make adjustments. But during recent years the changes in town and country have been drastic and rapid. We are now in the grip of powerful social forces which are influencing all the nations of the world, and in the United States these changes have been particularly rapid.

Urbanization

One of the major factors has been the urbanization of rural life. The mechanization of agriculture, the industrialization of rural occupations, centralization, transportation and social organization all enter into the picture, and, of course, one of the results is secularization, for as Robert E. Park has stated, "Urbanization and secularization go hand in hand."

The contrasts between urban and rural life are less definite today. Nearly every rural community is in some relationship with one or more urban centers. The automobile, airplane, radio and motion picture are especially influential in bringing the country and the city together.

Rural life is becoming more town-centered. Wherever centralized schools are found, the trend is inevitably toward the town. A survey of rural counties in Iowa, made recently by the Committee for Co-operative Field Research of the Home Missions Council and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, called attention to this trend toward the town as the center of interest and activities, and predicted even further change.

The Larger Community

Many of our rural churches have remained content with the old "horse and buggy" area of operation. Such an area does not have the population or resources to support the kind of church and the ministry that will command the respect and loyalty of the people. Just as the rural school has found it necessary to consolidate and move to a more logical center of operation, so must the church consider the geographical readjustment necessary to provide it with a sufficient challenge and give it the resources to meet the needs.

The next suggestion is that the rechurching of rural America does not mean simply the erection of new church buildings in the larger geographical communities. Unless methods and means can be found to enable the town and country church to penetrate the educational and social activities of the community in a larger and more aggressive service, the secular institutions will take over and the secularization process to which we have made reference will become more entrenched. The rechurching of rural America is necessary if this increased penetration of social and community life is to take place.

Leadership

Another factor in the rechurching of rural America which bears vital relation to what has already been suggested is leadership. Many rural ministers have done a valiant and superb job under difficult conditions, but an augmented ministerial leadership will be necessary to meet the call of enlarged populations and increased activities if geographical and functional rechurching takes place in a comprehensive way.

At least two persons, probably three, giving full time, will be needed for such a program as is here proposed: a minister in general charge and responsible for the preaching; a director of religious education who will have charge of the educational and social activities; and a pastor and personal counsellor who will give his time to these

aspects of need. This is the minimum of leadership for the kind of church that adequate rechurching should demand.

A casual study of such a program will convince any open-minded person that much of our rural leadership has not received the training necessary to do the job. The educational, sociological, moral and spiritual implications of the present day will demand a thoroughly trained leadership.

One of the hopeful signs toward meeting this need is that our theological seminaries are waking up to these new and larger demands in the training of the ministry. Some have already established strong departments of town and country church training and are fully aware of the need for rechurching rural America.

Cooperation and Unity

There is another factor involved in the rechurching of rural America which will probably prove to be the most important one. It is the one factor of change that is necessary before any of the other suggestions we have made can be realized. It is that of interdenominational cooperation and unity.

Denominations are competing with themselves, although a consolidation of some churches within a denomination is all that would be necessary to accomplish the rechurching process in certain areas. But in most rural areas it would involve the cooperation and uniting of churches of different denominations to achieve the end we desire. There are many rural areas where the spirit and the purpose are ripe to accomplish this interdenominational program.

A new and more truly Christian leadership is arising which is becoming conscious of the present situation and the necessity of breaking down denominational barriers and finding ways and means to consolidate forces in order to cope with the evils of our modern life on one hand, and on the other to meet the crying needs of the changes we have outlined by better program and leadership.

Convocation Registration

• Forty of the forty-eight states in our country were represented at the Lincoln Convocation. The map above and the tabulation below show the distribution:

New England States	5	Southern States	28
Middle Atlantic States	38	Southwestern States	26
Lake States	161	Mountain States	21
Plains States	317	West Coast States	11
		Canada	2

The rechurching of rural America is a *must,* if the things we profess as Christians are to be achieved. Too often we consider organizations, institutions and systems as ends in themselves. They seem to become more important than the things they were organized to achieve. This is a peril that is especially characteristic of the church. Systems become entrenched, if not petrified. To reconstruct these systems so they may better meet the new and all-inclusive needs of the people they serve is one of the imperative demands upon church leaders.

New Horizons of Need

The rechurching of rural America will require the reconstruction and revamping of our denominational systems. The words of one of our famous poets express a truth that is exceedingly significant as we think of this rechurching task:

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

Our denominations must cease from squabbling. They must end their divisiveness, on pain of losing their hold on the community, nay, on pain of losing their hold on Christ. God give us the grace and intelligence and conviction and spiritual power that is now necessary to move out toward new horizons of need. The rechurching of rural America is not the only means whereby this may be done, but it is an important step necessary in accomplishing the moral and spiritual ends of the Gospel of Christ.

Together may we seek to raise the conduct of the rural church in America to the level of statesmanship as a contribution to the whole church of Christ, and to the country of our loyalty and devotion.

The Challenge of the Rural-Nonfarm Population to the Churches

EDWIN L. BECKER

• Country life enthusiasts are today being confronted with a severe psychological adjustment. The day has finally come when rural life is no longer predominantly agricultural. In fact, rural life has today become so non-agricultural that far fewer than half of those who live in rural areas are now engaged in farming.

The last estimate of the United States Bureau of the Census shows that in April of 1948 the rural-nonfarm population was 32,568,000, nearly five million greater than the farm population. In one year, the rural-nonfarm group had increased by more than one and a half million while the farm population was increasing only 500,000. Since 1920 the farm population has been decreasing proportionately in the nation while the rural-nonfarm population has been increasing. Since 1940, there has been an increase in the rural-nonfarm population of well over five million, but in the rural-farm population there actually has been a net decrease of more than two and one-half million.

We have for a decade known the fact that very soon the farm would become the lesser half of "rural," but we have not yet adjusted our mentality and our emotions to that fact. We must more fully recognize the fact that when we plan for rural life we are dealing with an area in which agriculture is playing an increasingly specialized and minority role. The farmer has become the aristocrat of rural life. He is well organized and politically effective. There is a very great tendency on the part of the farmer to feel that rural life belongs to him and that all rural agencies are established primarily to serve him.

Problems for Organizations

This raises problems for all organizations trying to serve rural people. The extension service is working on a program that will meet the interests and needs of the rural-nonfarmer and still not neglect the legitimate needs of the farmer. Likewise, rural churches which have grown up in an agricultural area must now make the often difficult adjustment to a community whose population is less than half farmers.

Rural Residents

Thirty-five per cent of the rural population is not engaged in farming. These people live in the country but work elsewhere. This is the most rapidly growing group in the American population. It represents something of a "back-to-the-farm" movement in America.

Rural residents as a group have certain characteristics that are of significance to the church. They are younger than either the urban or farm population. They are people who have moved out for want of space in which to rear a family. They have more children than do either urban or even the farm families with which they neighbor. They have a very high rate of home ownership and at the same time a high mortgage indebtedness.

Most of the rural residents work in the city. They are professional people, skilled and unskilled laborers, and those engaged in service occupations.

Religious Ministry to Rural Residents

The problems faced by a religious ministry to the rural residents are many. Rural residents come from a variety of religious and social backgrounds. In one rural township bordering a city the residents were found to have more than one hundred different church backgrounds.

A second problem confronting the program of the church is that of mobility and fluidity. Many of the rural residents are newcomers and have no roots in community life. The daily movement of people from their homes to their work and to shopping and recreational centers has at least two consequences: it divides their interests between where they live and where they work, and it consumes a great amount of time. One rural resident said, "My community is not out where I sleep, but it is down where I work." Daily commuting creates added competition for time which the church would like to have from its members.

A third difficulty is financial. These rural residents are nearly all home-buying people, but there is a low percentage of home-owning. They are in areas where it is often found necessary to build new schools, new sewers, new paved streets. A new church building or adequate staff adds another burden to their already committed financial income.

The use of time presents still another problem for a successful church program. The man who owns 160 acres and works five days a week in a factory will not have many hours to give to church work. He, to be sure, stands at one extreme but the majority of rural residents have home enterprises which consume time. Not only are there screens to be repaired and installed, there is that room to be added, the garden to be cared for, and the lawn which never is completely groomed. Such work is closely akin to recreation. It characterizes the thriftiness and industry of families that want to be related to the soil and own property which provides some security.

As crucial as any problem which the church confronts in this area is the lack of community organization. There is often no community center. Fringe studies show that practically all trade for clothing and family needs except food is done in the city. Nine out of ten go into the city for medical and dental care. Social control is difficult and law enforcement inadequate. Vice organizations, taverns, and undesirable dance halls are attracted to rural areas out of reach of city police.

Challenges to the Church

Let us look briefly at four specific challenges which the rural non-

farm population places before the church:

The Evangelistic Challenge. Church membership is not keeping up with the increased rural-nonfarm population. Many who were once members of churches are now listed among the non-residents.

The rural church must reach out with a well-planned and aggressive program of evangelism. A religious census is a necessity. A systematic visitation of newcomers should be planned by the laymen of the church.

The Challenge to An Enlarged and Adjusted Church Program. We are still, by and large, trying to minister to the rural resident with churches that are served by a part-time ministry, are in disrepair and poorly equipped, and that have no sense of a community ministry.

In order to effectively minister to people with such diverse interests and religious backgrounds churches must become community churches. The rural resident should keep his denominational affiliation but at the same time he should develop what someone has called a "community atmosphere" in his local fellowship. Specialized religious workers are needed. A diversified staff is possible when churches cooperate in forming a larger parish, but they must provide modern educational facilities and attractive sanctuaries.

Developing Community Life. The rural church will work at a losing task unless it uses its influence to develop among farmer, laborer and professional worker a sense of common interest and loyalty to the community. It must discover the common interests in education, sanitation, law enforcement, and pioneer both for its own sake and for the sake of the community. It must seek to establish agencies and institutions that can express the common life of the people. This can be accomplished only as the church relates itself to the schools, the farm organizations, the labor unions, the parents' clubs, and other agencies.

The Challenge to Train a Ministry. Ministers are needed for this challenging task whose sympathies are broad, whose energies are unlimited, whose training has equipped them to work with all manner of men, whose wise education includes work in economics, sociology, agricultural and industrial relations, as well as in the traditional theological courses.

The rural church has long served the farmer. It has ministered for generations to the town dweller. It is this third group, the rural resident, which today challenges the ingenuity and resources of the rural church.

The Church Located Between Expanding Cities and Farm Areas

From the Commission Report

• The rural-urban fringe is designated as the expanding areas where people live on small tracts of land beyond the incorporated limits of a large city but who are employed in industry, professional occupations or service institutions, but where farming remains an important enterprise either connected with other work or as a full-time occupation.

The people are generally thrifty and industrious. Young home-owning and home-interested families with many children predominate. They do, however, have heavy mortgage indebtedness and financial obligations. Greatly diverse religious and cultural backgrounds are present, and there is lack of community organization and cohesion.

The problems which this area presents to the church are the financial aspect of home buying; the high rate of dependent people; many children; the fact that farmers resent newcomers and newcomers do not understand the farmers; divided occupational interests; time spent in commuting and in home development which the church would like to utilize.

How can one church reach such diverse elements and mold them into one Christian fellowship? How can the church program be adjusted to meet the needs of the people? Whose responsibility is it to help churches make the transition from the traditional rural church to an enlarged and adequate church? These and many other problems of church adjustment were studied by the commission.

It was felt that problems in the fringe area must be faced in cooperation with the city churches; that churches must develop a spirit and practices which seek to include the diverse elements in the area into their program and if possible into their membership, with emphasis on total family participation; that lay leadership must be used; that churches can help build community spirit by starting and fostering organizations which meet the common needs and interests of the people; for example, Boy Scout troops, civic improvement clubs, young married people's clubs, nurseries and kindergartens, etc. A statement is needed on comity in the fringe area which will guide city and state councils of churches.

EDWIN L. BECKER, *Chairman*
HAROLD MAGILL
LEROY MCREYNOLDS

How Did the Convocation Start?

• The Convocation was begun in 1943 because of the conviction of the Committee on Town and Country that there should be a regularly held gathering. National conferences had been held before under church auspices, in 1916 and in 1936. It was felt that there must be a continuous process. The decision to inaugurate the convocation, and the paper TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH, was considerably hastened by expressions of opinion as to their need on the part of prominent laymen in the churches.

Devotions at the Convocation

• Worship services at the Lincoln Convocation were conducted by Marjorie Minkler of the Woman's Division, Board of Missions of the Methodist Church. Miss Minkler's arrangements of scripture, poetry, meditations and hymns were much appreciated by those attending.

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The County Seat Church and Rural Life

ROCKWELL C. SMITH

• An old adage reminds us that "God made the country; man made the town; but the Devil made the small town!" Sweeping as these generalizations are both theologically and socially, they give us little clue as to the origin or sponsorship of the county seat town. History books tell us how in pioneer days rival hamlets struggled against one another by fair means and foul to be selected by the voters as county seats; but the county seats thus selected are a far cry from the county seat towns we know and serve today.

Political scientists have long criticized county government for its sprawling formlessness and irresponsibility. Rural sociologists have pointed out the social competition and conflict and the social disorganization that follows from so unintegrated a community center as the county seat. Such competition and conflict mean institutional over-organization and over-activity for the few with a consequent sense of strain and pressure, institutional neglect and non-participation for the many.

More than three-quarters of the county seats of the United States are our responsibility by ecclesiastical assignment. If we do not show some concern about them, their problems will not be met.

County Seat Churches

And beyond the sheer weight of numbers there is a further cogent reason for concern here on our part. Our farmers and small town folk are all governed from the county seat; from the county seat the welfare state reaches out to serve them if they are to be served at all. And the specifically agricultural programs, both governmental and private, which concern our people are directed from the county seat. If we want to serve farm folk, we must get the county seat in focus.

To the extent that there are significant regional variations, generalizations will be at least somewhat inaccurate. Nevertheless, there appear to be certain statements about county seat churches in general which we can safely make.

To begin with, quite generally the county seat churches we are concerned with are Protestant churches. The average county seat church is a medium-sized church. But while the county seat church appears to be a moderate-sized church with a generous budget and a good plant, judged by the more vital and Christian measure of available people reached, it is an inefficient institution.

Apparently what happens is that the county seat church, with its superior leadership and program, attracts from the surrounding hinterland the more alert farm population, leaving the less enterprising without the leadership or the resources necessary to maintain the smaller open-county churches. The smaller the county, the more apt the county seat church is to destroy small churches, while at the same time it fails to serve more than a small fraction of their former membership. The county seat church, then, by destroying the country church without serving its people, proves itself to be an inefficient institution in terms of the cause for which the church exists.

Class Consciousness

Finally, the county seat church is a class church. There are definite class lines and a clearly observable class structure in county seats serving typical rural areas, and the work of the church is carried on within this class structure, with little consciousness either of its existence or its incompatibility with the Gospel, and with almost no attempt to transcend it. Indeed, the church often becomes a means for expressing class differentiation, so that in Jonesville a man who wishes to rise from the middle class to the upper class, or within the middle class from lower to upper segments, will move

his membership from the Methodist or Baptist to the Federated church.

The county seat church then is a Protestant church, a medium-sized church, a church which is inefficient in serving its hinterland, and which reflects the class structure of which it is a part.

The local church must be that fellowship for all the individuals which constitute its responsibility. These individuals are, all too often, complacent, smug, settled. Their typical attitude toward change is to repudiate it and to oppose it in every possible way. They need to be reminded of the Gospel that makes all things new, for their own soul's sake. The county-seat church will best serve rural people when it develops in its own members that flexibility of outlook and sensitivity of spirit which will hold the door open to growth and maturity.

In 1939 in a study I was privileged to make in rural Wisconsin, I asked a series of pastors of diverse denominations to name for me the outstandingly Christian families of their churches. I secured thus the names of sixty-one families. I then went to the county officials and asked them to list the persons in the same communities to whom they would go if they wished local leadership. They gave me a total of thirty-eight names. But the sad fact was that only five names appeared both on the list of best Christians and on the list of most effective leaders. Apparently we as churchmen either do not influence the persons with whom we feel most successful to accept responsibility for leadership, or else we do not reach and serve leaders. Either explanation can give us little comfort.

Serving the Hinterland

The county seat churches have a certain killing power. They reach out to neighboring churches and take here and there a prosperous farmer into their membership. But the net result of this sort of service, as we have seen, is to take away the best leadership from the open-country church, as well as its strongest financial support, so that it sickens and dies, leaving an un-churched and ultimately pagan population over vast regions of the countryside. The county seat church must rethink its obligations to the small churches of its hinterland. It has long been the beneficiary of their zeal and piety, for from them have come its strongest leadership. What are its obligations to these creative fellowships in the countryside?

In the county seat the farm cooperative has its headquarters; the local labor unions have their halls; there all the governmental and social and recreational agencies have their facilities and their offices. If the standards which these institutions and agencies see in the church are standards of prestige and power, if the church becomes the agency through which the class structure of the community comes to its final and definitive expression, and if, through church membership, the niceties of class distinction are symbolized, then we must not be surprised if this same class system comes to fruition in the Farm Bureau or the C.I.O., in the Masonic Lodge or the garden clubs. But let the intoxicating spirit of Christianity find expression in a church where the poor have the Gospel preached to them; then, invisibly but irresistibly, the Gospel leaven will infect and perfect every agency of our common life.

Our day needs the church, registering effectively at the level of our significant social interactions. More and more the unit of rural life socially as well as administratively is becoming the county. That gives the county seat church an unsurpassed opportunity but an opportunity that may be lost if it is not appreciated and used. Let us remove the grave-clothes of respectability and smug comfort with which this church has so long been shrouded and make her again the servant of the living God.

Those attending the Convocation and those who address it speak for themselves and not for the Committee on Town and Country or the agencies to which it is responsible.

The Church in Rural Communities in Appalachia

From the Commission Report

• Appalachia was defined as the total mountainous section of eastern United States south of the Ohio River. The population in this area is not decreasing as it is in other areas of rural America. The educational level is lower than the national average although it is being steadily improved, as are the highways and transportation systems.

Rural electrification has lifted the living standards, and better housing is in evidence throughout rural Appalachia. Health conditions are being steadily improved through county health units.

Many churches in Appalachia are an outgrowth of mission schools which no longer exist.

Recommendations

The discussion group felt that Appalachia constitutes an outstanding missionary challenge far above the national average. The people living in this area should all be brought within the range and influence of the church through an adequate Christian educational program.

This group believes that consideration should be given by denominational boards to the publishing of interdenominational curricular material, adapted to the needs of the people in this area.

To adequately meet the needs of the people in Appalachia and to build the Kingdom of God, the church must be concerned with the total Christian community life. The best work in rural areas can be done by a ministerial leadership trained in rural church problems. We look to the time when rural church courses will be provided in all seminars as a requirement for graduation.

County units should be established for the cooperation of all the churches in study, planning, and projection of an adequate program to meet the needs of the community.

HENRY S. RANDOLPH, *Chairman*
JAMES M. CARR

Medical Care for Rural People

FRANK W. PECK

We have arrived at that stage in our democracy where we recognize that the health of all people is important to the public welfare in terms of economic efficiency, to democratic progress, and to the individual's inherent right to opportunities for obtaining human happiness. This essentially means that it is the public responsibility to provide health sustaining opportunities, based in part upon the ability of the individual to contribute to his own welfare.

Notwithstanding the far-flung development of good roads, of public education and almost universal adoption of the automobile as a transportation medium by rural people, this great task of equalizing rural and urban health services has been largely neglected until the last few years.

The principal problems that face rural people, as I see them, may be outlined under four needs:

1. The need for expanding the number of county Public Health units. One-third of our population lacks local health services to handle the six vital problems that exist in every community. The six services provided by the Public Health Service are:

(1) Vital statistics concerning local county people
(2) Environmental sanitation that is so important in preventing many diseases
(3) The control of communicable diseases
(4) Maternal and child health
(5) Public Health laboratory services
(6) Public Health education

According to the recommendations of the so-called "Emerson Report," no more than 1,200 additional health jurisdictions and no more than $1.50 per capita are required to give the entire country at least a minimum basic administrative framework of rural Public Health services.

2. The second problem may be described by asking how county health councils can be so organized and activated in all rural areas as to form a nucleus through which lay farm leadership can express its interest in this subject and make its greatest contribution toward bringing essential health services into their communities.

3. The third problem, as I see it, centers in ways and means of increasing the number of physicians and their auxiliary technical staffs, and the finding of ways to improve the maldistribution of physicians that now exists.

The economic and social implications, both in the training of physicians and in their distribution to serve the needs of rural areas, are complex and it will require considerable time to develop answers to some of the questions that are being asked.

One of the factors bearing upon rural practice is the lack of social opportunities for the wives and children of doctors in many rural areas. It has been said frequently that many doctors have expressed their desire to live and work in rural communities, but that their wives had different ideas.

4. The fourth problem is that of financing additional rural health services. Who will pay the medical service bill? There are differences of opinion among lay leadership,

Photograph by Gustav Anderson
A. Devaney, Inc., N. Y.

among professional leaders, and among government agencies and members of Congress. It is quite obvious from all the available records that an appreciable proportion of our population both in urban and rural areas cannot pay the cost of essential medical services. Some of them can pay a part of the cost; others can pay none. A large group pay much more than the cost and contribute to the services rendered others less fortunate, all this of course on a voluntary basis.

More Light Needed

There is one element in this financing situation that needs safeguarding. Only the best quality of medical and dental service will serve the needs of rural people. Cheapening the service will only make conditions worse. The costs are high—so high in many instances as to practically ruin unfortunate families. Spreading the cost by an organized prepayment plan over an area sufficient to provide sizeable total funds is one answer. But this requires paying for services that many families will not use, and this is often resisted by those who pay over extended periods of time.

This financing problem is complicated by the provisions of the President's plan for using federal aid through an insurance provision that is commonly termed "compulsory" or "socialized" or "subsidized," with the objective of attempting to render more adequate medical services to all who want them, the cost of those unable to pay being borne directly by the Treasury. It has a number of implications that need to be studied by all leaders, be they lay, professional or governmental. Educators need to understand all phases of private and public financing so that their local people may have a better understanding of the issues involved and come to their own independent opinion as to whether or not they want to support wholly voluntary plans, whether they want the compulsory plan proposed by the President, or whether they want some other plan that involves both private and public funds but on a different basis than that in the so-called Ewing proposal.

Responsibility of Educators

This brings me to the educators' responsibility in the whole problem of more adequate rural health services.

The educational problem goes deeper than the extension or adult education phases. It starts with our elementary and secondary schools. Are rural school teachers so informed anent this whole situation as to teach sanitation, personal hygiene and the elementary types of preventive measures to rural boys and girls? Do we have in our high schools the type of preliminary training that might well result in more medical students coming from rural areas? Are we developing in rural communities the type of vocational guidance that will tend to give the proper advice to adolescent youth, not only in the medical area but in any other?

In a situation so complex, difficult and dynamic as that of rural health in the United States, satisfactory solutions to all the problems involved are not to be found quickly. These problems have been developing for generations. Their solutions will require time, thought, effort, skill, cooperation, good will and patience.

Cooperators

• The Convocation can only be held with the excellent cooperation of church organizations in the region and state.

At Lincoln we recorded our thanks to St. Paul Methodist Church, the Nebraska Council of Churches and Religious Education, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, the radio stations, the newspapers, the hotels of the city, and the many church people who opened their homes.

The Rev. Carroll Lemon of the Nebraska Council of Churches and the Rev. Paul J. Baird, of the Presbyterian Church of Lexington, Nebraska, served us faithfully and steadily throughout the Convocation.

The Church in Rural Industrial Communities

From the Commission Report

• This commission gave consideration to two types of industrial communities: mining communities and those where some type of manufacturing or processing provides a significant portion of income.

The coal mining community is in need of a strong ministry by the church. Paternalism, denominational competition, a weak ministry, poor church equipment and a narrow conception of religion combine to impede the progress of vital Christianity.

If we are to make a united Christian impact upon these communities, there should be comity agreements made on the state level. Local management, often interested in the church but woefully ignorant of church management and policy, needs the counsel of the leaders of the church.

It is the commission's conviction that the denominational community church offers the best means of serving all the people and all the interests of the community.

Basic Needs

There is an urgent need for a trained, full-time resident ministry for coal mining communities. Such a ministry should be evangelistically and socially minded, capable of giving leadership in all phases of community life. This ministry needs a sense of mission growing out of a thorough understanding of the miners' backgrounds and problems.

To meet the present demand for adequate leadership we suggest the use of in-service training schools for men already serving in these communities. To prepare future leaders we suggest that our seminaries introduce their students to this type of ministry through studies and clinical experiences. Young men desiring this type of service could well serve a period of internship before graduation.

In view of the present inadequate financial support for the full-time ministry in these communities, we suggest that, on the basis of comity

arrangements, the ministry be given full, denominational financial backing until the local church becomes well able to support itself.

In view of the limited and antiquated church program, we believe that a life-centered and all-inclusive program should be offered through the Christian-center or settlement-house type of ministry.

Equipment for such a program, including a church building with facilities for all needed activities, is indispensable. The present one-room church house, located on company property and owned by the company, in most instances represents a limited conception of religion.

Recommendations

This commission recommends that the Home Missions Council of North America assume leadership in this type of industrial community and give guidance to the denominations now working in these communities. This guidance should point toward needed studies in these areas, comity assignments of communities and neighborhoods to denominations, the prevention of overchurching and competition on the local level, recommendations as to the type of building and equipment, suggestions on the elements in the local program, and most important, a crusade for dedicated, trained leadership in these communities that will result in pastors with specialized training for successful leadership.

The church should take the leadership in forming community councils in industrial communities where organizations have grown without thought of community need, in order to correlate the activity of the community.

To decrease the possibility of the small, part-time church, the Larger Parish Plan should be considered.

Conferences, discussions, open meetings, etc., should be used on an area basis to acquaint the laity with other groups than those of which they are members.

MARK RICH, *Chairman*
WARD W. HIBBS
ALFRED C. BARTHOLOMEW

The Town and Country Church and This Convocation

ELLIOTT L. FISHER

• There never has been a time when the rural community has been of more importance and of more concern to the people of this country and the world at large than the days through which we are now passing. Rural America has not only the obligation of providing food for millions both here and abroad, but also to keep before mankind the eternal truth that man does not live by bread alone.

I am very certain that the hour has come when we need to get over our inferiority complex. We now have the best trained and equipped rural ministry that the church has ever known. Across America, we are giving the kind of leadership that rural areas have long been praying for. Working with all the forces of the community and facing all of the economic and social problems of rural life, we are building—slowly, but surely—the Kingdom of God in the countryside.

I have seen them take water, soil and men—spiritualize these forces—and, from them, develop Christian communities! This is evangelism with a purpose.

Socially and economically the town has become of more and more importance in our American culture, yet the fact remains that it is dependent upon the neighboring farm areas, not only for its food supply, but also for its population source. The town church is in danger of overlooking the fact that it is more blessed to give than to receive —more blessed to minister to than to be ministered unto.

Money, time and energy are now being spent to continue ineffective churches which in many instances merely keep a church alive for statistical purposes. These could well be used to provide a full-time ministry and a program that will attract youth, unite the Christian forces of the community, and challenge them to build together the Kingdom of God.

Comity agreements and exchange of fields, both in old and new areas of service, may be the way that calls for greater sacrifice on the part of people and denominations but in the long run they will pay the biggest dividends in terms of the coming of God's Kingdom to the countryside.

The Commissions of the Convocation

• Each of the commissions of the Convocation consisted of an interested group of people who met for the purpose of formulating recommendations as to future program emphases for the rural church—national, state and local, especially local.

The digests of the commission reports, as published in this issue, were taken from summaries furnished by chairmen or secretaries of commissions or both, or persons named by them. The names appearing after the commission reports are those who, we understand, were mainly responsible for either the commission program or for the report furnished to us.

This year, special attention was given to preparation for the National Congress of Home Missions.

The 1951 Convocation

• It is the intention of the Committee on Town and Country to "take the Convocation around the country." For this reason we have met at such points as San Jose, California, and Rochester, New York, as well as in the Middlewest. For 1951 no decision had yet been made when this issue was prepared. We are considering several invitations. Announcements will be made as early as possible in TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH.

The Development of the Resources of the Missouri Valley in Relation to Rural Life and the Rural Church

RAY E. WAKELEY

• The Missouri Valley, or basin, is an area in which tremendous and far reaching changes are taking place. These changes constitute a challenge to the rural church in the United States and a golden opportunity to the rural churches located in the valley.

The Missouri is the largest single river in the United States. Its waters flow from ten states, and its basin includes all or the major part of seven of those states. The valley includes one-sixth of the total area and one-fourth of the total farmland in the United States. Lack of rainfall in the valley is a crucial fact and the distribution and utilization of the available water supply is a most critical issue in the entire valley.

Three major types of farming characterize the valley; range livestock in the western half, wheat farming in the northeast corner and in the south, with the western tip of the corn belt in the eastern part of the valley, extending westward between the northern and the southern wheat areas.

The total population of the valley in 1940 was approximately 7,000,000. Of these 2,500,000 persons lived on nearly 600,000 farms and ranches in the valley. The valley is predominantly rural with schools, churches and economic services maintained in the towns and villages.

The total number of persons in the valley changed little since 1920. The net migration out of the area between 1920 and 1940 was approximately equal to the total natural increase. As a result the valley has not kept pace with the rest of the country in population growth.

There are marked differences in the national and religious backgrounds of settlers in various areas of the valley.

Changing Situation

We must conclude that the valley is a giant rural area with giant surpluses of crops that are marketed, processed and consumed elsewhere with surpluses of people that must go elsewhere because they have no suitable employment in the valley—either agricultural or industrial.

During the decade just past a remarkable change has come over the valley. Uniformly favorable weather has changed the valley from the land of desolation and despair which it was during the great drought of the 1930's. It is now a land of plenty and promise. Farmers are feathering their nests.

But all is not well. As Secretary of Agriculture Brannan said last spring, "Unwise management of land and poor land and cropping practices are common throughout the basin. As a result, deterioration goes on largely unchecked in our resources, and the basin is becoming increasingly vulnerable to the unpredictable advent of another great drought.

Development Program

Agitation and planning for public assistance to develop the valley has been actively under way for nearly 15 years.

Seemingly it is fair to conclude that the program for the development of the resources of the valley is a program for the people rather than a program by the people. It is a program made by groups of experts who do not agree among themselves and whose basic disagreements may jeopardize the entire program. Time here will not permit outlining the entire program for valley development, but a brief summary of the proposed program for agriculture will be given to indicate its nature and scope.

The broad objectives of the agricultural program are the development and conservation of land, water and forest resources; and for flood control.

The agricultural program will proceed on 5 major functional fronts:

1. Conservation and improvement of grassland and cropland on the 282,000,000 acres in 582,000 farms and ranches.

2. Development of forests and forest ranges on 72,000,000 acres of forest land, 80 percent of which is owned by the government.

3. Development of measures for preventing erosion and stabilizing the flow in small stream water courses.

4. Increase through irrigation from 5,000,000 to 12,000,000 acres—from 38,000 to 75,000 farms.

5. Drainage of nearly 6,000,000 acres of farm land, much of which is protected by levees built by the Army Engineers.

From Efficient Production to Better Living

Truly there is nothing small about the valley program. The resources of the Department of Agriculture are pledged to support these efforts by providing soil surveys and land classifications; by providing necessary technical assistance, through supporting efforts in research, electrification, farm credit, and extension education; and last but not least, by reimbursing farmers for part of the initial cost of the program. The total cost to the government over a thirty-year period is estimated at $3,000,000,000.

It appears obvious that we will continue to fight a losing battle in the valley if we just develop it into an area from which bigger surpluses of agricultural products are exported to other parts of the United States where markets are better than in the valley. The agricultural program can meet its conservation objectives only when the values of conservation as a desirable end have been adopted by the people of the valley and when self help is increased rather than diminished by government assistance.

No government program has been proposed for the improvement of family and community living in the valley. Apparently such programs are to be left to the states, to the state departments, the land-grant colleges, to the farmers organizations, to the churches, schools, local government units, business agencies and to other organized groups located in the valley. The towns and villages in the valley are the community centers which hold the key to the cultural development as well as the industrial development of the valley. Churches and other organizations must act together on a program which will facilitate social and economic adjustment and promote better living under the very special conditions and forces operating in the valley.

Beyond the job of understanding the local situation and providing local leadership there are a number of more specific tasks which the rural church might undertake. The first task of any church is to maintain a good church.

Since the valley is characterized by considerable population movement the churches must be vigilant to assimilate newcomers in church and community, and to obtain transfer of membership from previous to present location. The rural church in the valley must also give special attention to the unchurched. Since the agricultural program is the biggest new development in the valley, church leaders should know the program thoroughly and promote it wholeheartedly. The church can promote attitudes favorable to the fullest possible growth of human personality, and contribute to the sound development of the valley, the community and the church.

In the valley the conservation of physical resources must receive major attention, but the conservation of human resources must not be neglected.

Larger community centers are needed with more complete services. Community schools, libraries, newspapers, mental and physical health services, and community recreation should receive increasing emphasis and attention. Local industries will furnish jobs for both farm and nonfarm people. A community council will be needed to facilitate local planning.

The valley is a young country and the churches have a special responsibility to develop leadership among young people. Local groups are the cradle of leadership and no local groups use more volunteer leaders than do our churches. Churches must encourage young people to translate their ideals into action, to accept responsibility for their own acts, and to develop leadership through practice in church and community groups.

The rural church, though usually divided and sometimes weak is still the best hope of the Missouri Valley among voluntary local organizations. It will succeed as it raises high the ideals of the people, as it stabilizes and services a mobile population, as it cooperates in the agricultural program, and as it develops a more coordinated local program of action in larger and better equipped town and country communities. Here is the opportunity of a lifetime for the rural church.

Social and Economic Relations

From the Commission Report

• The commission studied a document which is going through several stages of revision. It is hoped that from this process there will eventually emerge a statement for publication which will stand on a level with previously published statements on "Man's Relation to the Land," a Commitment of Advance, and Comity Principles.

The commission calls attention to the exceedingly dynamic character of modern rural life, and the consequent need for alert and flexible leadership to meet the challenge of changing social and economic relations.

The commission emphasized such imperatives as the necessity "to develop Christian family life, to apply the teachings of Christ to all relations of life, to teach that all men are stewards, accountable to God, to give people a Christian scale of values."

The role of the government was not discussed directly, but it was clear that the commission believed that there should be a carefully preserved balance in our rural life between local initiative and self help, and social legislation and federal aid. Government is recognized and accepted as a tool of the people's welfare in a democracy.

Further progress will be noted in TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH.

ALICE MALONEY, *Chairman*
New York
SHIRLEY E. GREENE, *Secretary*
Merom, Ind.

Revision of Comity Principles

• A commission met under the chairmanship of Ray Magnuson of the Methodist Church in Nebraska for the purpose of contributing to a revision of the "Comity Principles" of the Committee on Town and Country.

A previous revision of the "Comity Principles" appeared in TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH of March, 1947.

Further progress on the revision will be reported in TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH.

Purposes of This Journal

The purposes of this Journal are:

A. To encourage cooperation among rural churches.

B. To improve the administration of the local church, this to include organization of the church, finance, religious education, community relationships, and the training of lay leadership.

C. To stimulate the development of a Christian philosophy of rural life, this to embrace ethical issues in agriculture, social reconstruction, and government programs; and the content of the minister's message.

Part of Larger Program

The Journal is an important part of an enlarged "cooperative rural church program" that will encourage a national "rural church movement."

The Church with Both Village and Farm Populations

From the Commission Report

• Assuming that the typical community with both village and farm populations has adequate resources such as number of people, material wealth, educational achievement, primary groups and geographic coherence, the commission studied methods of helping this community lift itself from impotency, competition, floundering and misrule, to harmony, consciousness and planning and progress.

Suggestions were made for increasing community stability by means of a placement service for young people, community recreation and the training of local leaders.

In line with the preparation of leaders it was felt that denominational headquarters should let pastors and church leaders know when and how denominations are cooperating on national programs, and also that a guide book or study course should be published which would help churches develop lay leadership on the rural community level.

It was agreed that a better trained and less transient church ministry should be provided the church in this area on a full-time basis. Theological seminaries should give special attention to the training of pastors in the primacy of their obligation to the welfare of the community, and pastors should take advantage of the in-service training programs that are being held throughout the country.

One part of the problem of more adequately ministering to rural Protestantism is the question of salaries. The elimination of needless churches would not only solve many inadequate salary situations but would vastly enhance the local prestige of the church. Protestantism is paying an exorbitant premium for the luxury of denominational variety in great numbers of small communities.

The church must give more consideration to and more adequately use the family in its activities. All families belong to the community and so should have the ministry of the church. More time needs to be spent on human relationships. The family and its relationships in the community must become a strategic interest of the church. Children should be encouraged, by special activities, to form the church-going habit.

The question of how far to go in "dividing loyalties" between one's church and the community or interdenominational movements was among those considered. It was felt that women's organizations, a youth fellowship group, and music or drama groups were effective means of bringing people with different interests together.

There is need for a guide book or study course for helping to develop lay leadership in the rural community. There should be increasing use of the project method in training lay leaders.

Claude J. Snyder, *Chairman*
Alva Knoll, *Secretary*

The Church in Rural Communities Isolated by Natural Barriers and Great Distances

From the Commission Report

• The several types of isolation due to great distances and natural barriers were found to include the following:

A. Those isolated by water; that is, those living on islands and in fishing villages.
B. Those isolated by mountains: the Appalachian and Ozark regions and the mountainous areas of the west.
C. Those living on cut-over and marginal lands, such as in northern Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan, and in certain rural sections of the south.
D. Those living in mining and lumbering camps.
E. Those isolated by distance and where the land is thinly settled.

Inasmuch as some of these areas were studied by other commissions of the Convocation and most of the members of this commission were from the western part of our country, it was decided to concentrate on the isolated areas in the mountain and ranch country of the west.

It was agreed that the problems of isolated people cannot be met in any area by one church body alone but must be met on a cooperative basis, using the total resources of all the major denominations. In order to do this, there is need for an understanding of isolated people and their needs and for a program aimed at meeting these needs.

It was felt that much confusion and lack of efficiency result from trying to make cooperative arrangements that are planned by executives who are far from the immediate territory. The group felt that it would be better to allow those who are working in the field itself to develop the program on a basis of actual needs as evidenced by their own experience. If this procedure is followed it will be necessary for each minister to know what the other ministers in the area are doing. The ministers in the area should meet regularly for the purpose of planning their work and the use of all the available resources. It was felt also that the Home Missions Council, when making a survey of isolated areas, should ask the cooperation of local men.

Methods of distributing church literature by mail were discussed, and it was felt that such distribution should be closely related to the life and needs of isolated people.

There is great need for men and women who are willing to work among the isolated people of our land. This need should be brought to the attention of students in the theological and other church training schools. Those who accept the challenge of serving people in communities isolated by natural barriers or great distances should be consecrated to the work of the Kingdom of God and, in addition, be adaptable, well educated for the work which they are undertaking, and have a sincere love of people for their own sakes.

E. Dargan Butt, *Chairman*

Rural Issues of Concern to Rural Churchmen

DOUGLAS ENSMINGER

• Increasingly I am impressed with the very great contribution the church and religion have had in the development of our nation. In a very real sense, religion is the moral fiber—the cultural straw—which has been so interwoven into the community life and activities over the years, giving stability and direction to community growth.

As I have seen the rural church and talked with rural leaders throughout the country, I detect no lessening of interest in religion. There seems to be general agreement that individuals, families, communities and nations must have some common value systems which are conditioned by and underpinned by religious and moral values. The most important single issue facing rural churchmen is the failure of the church to adjust to change rapidly enough to remain in a dominant role of leadership in the community. To do so, denominationalism must be made a secondary consideration.

Intermediate-sized towns come near to being able to integrate the people in the trade area into communities than do either large or small trade centers.

Measured in terms of population and trade services, these intermediate-sized towns range from 400 population in sparsely settled areas to 3,000 and 4,000 in more densely settled areas. These same intermediate towns average from twenty-five to seventy-five types of services. It was the towns with populations from 400 to 3,500, even though they seldom had more than fifty kinds of services, which the farm people in their trade areas recognized as effective—good communities.

We now come to the implications of these and similar findings to churchmen. They show that the number and kind of trade services which a town provides is not the sole measure of whether its trade area is a rural community. Intermediate-sized towns (400 to 3,500) outrank large towns as good communities even though they do not provide all necessary or desired services. A smaller intermediate-sized town outranks a larger intermediate-sized town if its trade area constitutes a consolidated school district, if it is the focus of the churches attended by farm people, and if it has good recreational facilities.

The Church in Rural Communities with Sparse and Scattered Population

From the Commission Report

• In considering the economic problems of the church in rural communities with sparse and scattered population it was observed that churches and their communities are stabilized by a stable population; that a stable population is made possible by home ownership; that tenant farms become increasingly marginal; and that a non-resident ministry and non-resident land ownership are usually closely related.

Since free enterprise must be matched by a sense of stewardship, the group felt that the church (on both denominational and local levels) should discover ways of helping to finance home ownership; that investments made by institutions in large estates should be diverted into more personal channels; that the family-size farm should become the pattern for Christian rural America.

Many problems arise from lack of planning, and this commission feels that Protestants should hold national planning conferences in the immediate future for the purpose of projecting a long-range program for town and country churches, comparable to the two hundred-year program of the Roman Church.

An inadequately trained leadership results in social confusion and religious frustration. Therefore, this group affirms that only pastors of quality and specialized training should assume rural leadership. We urge our colleges and seminaries to restudy their curricula, and seek to give adequate preparation to leaders for the sparsely settled areas.

Religious illiteracy is becoming more prevalent in America. Ninety per cent of the religious radio programming is utterly unrelated to the message, policy and program of the established churches. This commission recommends the establishment of a radio interdenominational program, dealing with religious instruction of children.

The Home Missions Council should seek to coordinate the entire audio-visual education program for this sparsely settled area. The distribution of religious literature from denominational sources to all homes in sparsely settled communities is also recommended.

The Larger Parish

Inasmuch as there are competing and overlapping religious activities in many localities, and federated and community churches do not always provide the answer to the problem, we recommend that the larger parish, wisely administered, be given greater emphasis; that encouragement to merge be given to small local groups which have similar backgrounds and interests; and that loyalties and sentimental attachments be regarded as sacred. We believe that interdenominational meetings for prayer, worship, evangelism and personal witnessing should be encouraged.

To combat some of the problems of isolation, we commend the "flying parson" idea advanced by the Lutherans, and plead for adequate religious radio programs to be broadcast to the homes of the great west so that the people in rural communities with sparse and scattered population may be kept aware of the church.

B. H. CAIN, *Chairman*
CLARK HARSHFIELD
J. P. ALLISON

Churches in the Cut-over Timberlands of the Northern States

From the Commission Report

• In general, two areas fall within what might be described as cut-over and timberlands: The northern sections of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York and the northern sections of Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

These areas have some problems peculiar to the area—the first, that timber, as a source of income, has been harvested once, and income on replacement growths of timber is a long-term proposition. Timber is a slow-growing product, and ways and means of holding lands until timber matures is one of the needs of the areas. Attention was called to the state of Wisconsin, which has arranged that taxes may be suspended on lands being reforested under approved practices until an income can be realized from timber.

A second problem is the soil, which is often too poor for farming. In some places isolated pockets of fair land are found; in other instances, dairying and poultry farming have been found to be successful alternatives.

A third problem is that recreational use is a growing factor in the timber areas, and brings its own problems. For example, it involves Sunday work for those who operate camps, resorts, and recreational facilities.

A fourth problem is a sociological one: isolation in rough and wooded areas cuts down mobility of culture and ideas. The result is expressed in what the sociologist calls "Sacred Islands," meaning that isolated communities tend to reverence old ideas and patterns, and are slow to accept changes. Such attitudes bring special problems—a lack of alert leadership, prevalence of superstition, extreme conservatism, a small degree of church affiliation, "breeding out" of religious enthusiasm, irregular patterns of social conduct.

With such an analysis of the major problems, the question arose as to methods which will be able to bring the Gospel to people in such areas. It was pointed out that one thing must be clearly understood: The Gospel is the end, the church the means. With such an understanding, three characteristics of action were proposed:

1. Our general approach must be one of total areas, instead of individual communities. In the face of migration out of the communities to the more populated centers; in the face of growing consolidation of school and shopping areas; and in the face of the increase of communication and transportation, the church must look at larger areas than its immediate community.

2. The general approach must be one of participation by people of the community rather than a program imposed from outside it. Success here will depend upon the degree to which the church itself has a community approach and sees its task as in the whole area of community life.

3. The basic philosophy of a church program must be an aggressive, creative one. This means consolidation and unification of the church program to include all churches in the area wherever possible. It means the training of ministers who see multiple-church parishes as a single job, rather than two or three or four jobs. It means that ministers will be needed who will work at the task of broadening the outlook of the churches themselves and who will commit themselves to a long-term ministry. It means also the investigation of new procedures and ideas by the executives, ministers, and churches in such areas to discover the particular needs in any area. Attention was called to the development of larger parishes, group ministry programs, sponsoring churches, and interdenominational and interchurch cooperation.

State councils of churches or state executives could and ought to initiate action in our cut-over areas. We suggest, therefore, to them the following procedures:

1. Meetings of concerned people should be held to determine the needs, and find some way of meeting new problems; such questions as the following should be raised: Should there be a cooperative program? What are the problems of a region? Can the problems be approached on a cooperative regional basis?

2. Explore possible solutions by such means as seminars, including social and economic experts to talk over the whole cluster of problems raised.

3. Survey and define some specific geographical area where concentrated experimental work may be carried on.

To the ministers interested in these areas we recommend:

1. That they attempt to strengthen local and state councils of churches and interest them in such plans.

2. Churches involved in problems of church life in isolated areas should present surveys and propose possible alternative solutions for consideration of the constituency.

3. Ministers should become familiar with and publicize the pioneer movements in the field of area ministries.

4. They should encourage leading laymen to visit and study problems of such communities.

THOMAS A. TRIPP, *Chairman*
ORVAL W. SAMPSON, *Secretary*

The Church in Communities in the Midst of Government Reclamation and Rehabilitation Projects

From the Commission Report

• Three major government reclamation projects were considered by this commission; namely, Central Valley, California; Columbia Basin, Washington; and the Missouri River Basin projects in the following states: Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas, with minor projects in Iowa and Missouri.

The major purpose of the reclamation projects is an attempt to provide protection from local floods which take considerable toll of prop-

rty and life. The effort is made to mpound water in reservoirs in pe-iods of heavy run-off from the land, nd release it during periods of low ream flows.

In the Central Valley area plans ow call for the irrigation of some our to five million acres; in the Missouri Valley Basin 4,760,400 cres of new land and the furnish-ng of supplemental waters to 547,-00 additional acres; in the Colum-ia Basin, 1,029,000 acres are to be rrigated.

Another purpose accomplished by he release of the waters from the eservoirs is the creation of electric ower.

Government Schedule

It should be emphasized that the government schedule for the com-pletion of these projects is a long-ime program. For example, the onstruction of the 105 dams in the Missouri Valley Basin for the im-pounding of flood waters is expected o take anywhere from forty to sixty ears for completion. Similar long-ime plans are made for the other wo projects.

Changes may be expected in hree aspects of the social and eco-nomic life of the people living in hese areas; namely, type of farm-ng, recreational, and industrial.

More intensified farming is neces-ary if full benefits are to be derived rom irrigation. This will mean a maller number of acres cultivated per man than under dry farming and ranching techniques now com-monly used in many of the areas. Many of the present settlers will have difficulty making the shift from wheat farming, for example, to the cultivation of beets or dairying.

It is very difficult to estimate what will be the effect upon the recrea-tional life of a large portion of the nation with the creation of consid-erably more than one hundred new lakes. Increased opportunities for swimming, boating, fishing, picnick-ing, etc., will be available for mil-lions of people.

The Church's Responsibility

It should be noted that California and Washington are among those states which have the lowest percentage of church members. It has been estimated that only approximately one person out of every five in the state of Washington and one out of four in California are members of any denomination.

The task of extending the influence of the church in these areas is so great that it cannot be accomplished without the correlated efforts of every denomination.

In the development of these reclamation projects the church must not only plan for the time when the work is completed and stabilized conditions prevail, but it must also plan to meet the spiritual needs of the migrant workers. This calls for the setting up of immediate and also long-time goals or objectives.

A church program which will meet the religious needs of engineering and construction workers should also be provided.

A mobile-unit type of ministry would be one of the effective ways of developing new church programs, these mobile units to explore the needs, begin a program, survey longer term developments, and provide a ministry for the constantly moving migrant group of construction workers. Also, the development of larger parishes and other cooperative methods of parish work, such as interdenominational group-ministry projects, should prove effective.

Recommendations

This commission recommends that all denominational bodies study publications, bulletins, and basic data published by governmental and interagency bureaus.

It recommends that where local funds are not sufficient the denominational national boards supplement these funds to provide for an adequately trained and, where necessary, a specially trained ministry; also where necessary the denominations should take sufficient interest in a united denominational approach through building a fund to implement the work.

We recommend that local churches organize farm and home committees to assist Protestant families in settling and resettling upon the land through providing funds, working with the Farm Home Administration program of insured mortgages and with local agencies for financing. This local committee or another committee in our local churches, with pastors taking leadership and responsibility, should assist in the resettlement adjustment of the families and assist local agencies in aiding the families to adjust to the new type of farming practices.

We recommend, also, that the Home Missions Council be requested to sponsor a study of American sects in one or more of these reclamation settlements with the idea of determining not their theology, their meaning and their practices, but the psychological, social and economic facts conditioning the favorable response of the people of these areas toward the various sect movements.

ELLIOTT L. FISHER, *Chairman*
ROY A. STURM, *Secretary*

The Church in Rural Communities in Cotton-Growing Regions

From the Commission Report

• In the cotton-growing area, only a small proportion of the land is Grade One (1.5 per cent), while 90 per cent of the land is Grade Three, Four and Five. Thus the importance of soil improvement and conservation is recognized. According to the 1940 census the population of the southeast and southwest was equal to about 29 per cent of the total population. But estimates indicate that these areas have only about 17 per cent of the wealth.

The rural communities of this region also have relatively high numbers of children. Thus it is reported that the area with the highest percentage of children has also the smallest percentage of wealth with which to educate those children. A high proportion of the people migrate to other regions. The rate of farm tenancy is relatively high. The rural church situation is marked in most instances by a lack of cooperation. How shall the churches become

interested in the improvement of conditions?

The church should come to an understanding of rural problems.

The churches should be vitally interested in the rural health problem and should encourage the improvement of health facilities and agencies.

The local churches should work together in the local community, but should preserve neighborhood values.

The churches should encourage all efforts to reduce the percentage of farm tenancy.

The churches should encourage organized programs of soil improvement and conservation.

V. A. EDWARDS, *Chairman*

This Is How We Did It

THEODORE B. JAMES

• This is not solely an experience of the Presbyterian church which I serve but of what a group of rural churches did in Johnson County of central Indiana on a cooperative, interdenominational basis, sponsored by the Council of Churches and Ministerial Association.

Johnson County of central Indiana and its county seat, Franklin, is located twenty miles south of Indianapolis. This county is a typical Hoosier rural county with its typical county seat town. Its problems are not exceptional. It has good tillable soil with eighty per cent of the county acreage in farm land. The size of its average farms, the amount of tenancy, the tenure of the land is not particularly out of proportion to other counties in Indiana.

We have a large number of commuters to offices and factories in Indianapolis, and a large number of families buying up small plots of land for homes. Our rural nonfarm or "rurbanite" population is increasing rapidly. With factories moving into the midwest from the coastal areas of the United States, the population will continue this increase. Our rural churches must be alert and ready to minister to these changes.

Rural Church Institute

Some of the ministers in Johnson County have long felt the need for some type of a rural church institute which might point up some of our problems in an interesting manner. So in the late summer of 1948 we secured the proceedings of a conference on *A Protestant Program for the Family Farm* which was held at Garrett Biblical Institute in the spring of that year, and followed its suggestions rather closely for a one-day program. Nineteen different churches were represented that day with an attendance of over one hundred.

An opening statement of purpose and stress on the spiritual and social aspects of the family farm, including a definition of it, was given by Dr. Henry S. Randolph.

The county agent presented the land tenure situation in Johnson County, using maps and graphs.

Then the results of the church history and status survey of the County were given, as compiled by a committee of ministers. This survey showed where we were today in comparison to twenty-five years ago.

The Reverend Edwin L. Becker was also with us and gave us an insight into the rural church situation throughout the United States.

After the noon luncheon we had a farmer of the county tell us of the forms of leases prevailing in the county. We discovered that too few of the farmers really knew much about this subject.

Then the assistant county agent discussed the terms of standard lease agreements recommended by the State College of Agriculture at Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana.

A representative of the Production Credit Administration gave information on the manner in which loans are made to farmers.

The concluding portion of the program was a panel discussion by a vocational agricultural teacher, the home demonstration agent, a young married farmer, and a senior high school boy. They contributed much by their frank ideas about ways of being best prepared for taking up responsibilities of farm operation.

Dr. Okel F. Hall, for twenty-five years head of the rural sociology department at Purdue University, gave us a summary of the day's activities and from it drew some very good recommendations.

Two indirect results of our institute were (1) an interdenominational visitation evangelism campaign was held in Johnson County last spring, and (2) a soil conservation district is being organized in Johnson County.

Who Follows Up the Convocation?

• The ideas and specific plans considered are implemented in numerous ways and channels. The persons who took part in the Lincoln meeting are the first and foremost line of implementation. These men and women live in rural communities. They are pastors and lay people in local churches. They are administrators of numerous denominational and interdenominational agencies. They are teachers and writers, and students in colleges and seminaries.

The local and state councils of churches have special responsibilities for furthering the cooperative aspects of the Convocation's ideas and plans. There is an extensive follow-up through the religious press and news services. The daily press calls attention to Convocation highlights.

Nationally, a responsibility for follow-up rests upon the various rural church departments of the constituent denominations, and also their agencies of religious education. The Committee on Town and Country is the national clearing house for interdenominational programs, and it has responsibility for those aspects of the Convocation's recommendations requiring national collaboration among the religious bodies.

Issues of TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH are, we hope, influential in implementation.